

**Acceleration: Finding a Way to Put the Wind Beneath Their Wings**  
**Action Research Project CI 515**  
**Tera Hahn**  
**April 22, 2012**

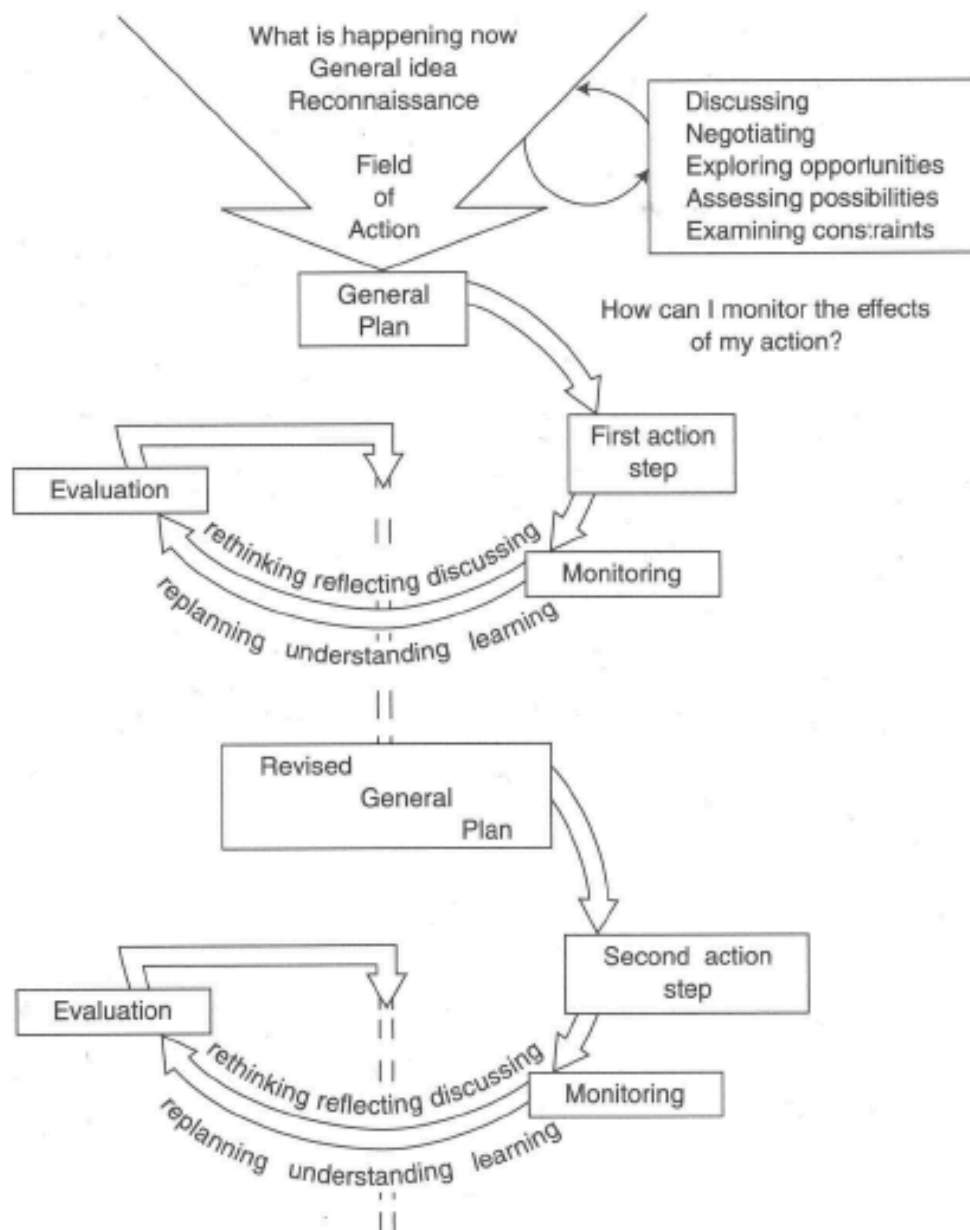
## **Acceleration: Finding a Way to Put the Wind Beneath Their Wings**

### **Introduction**

Acceleration, and the many forms of it, has been widely studied. The research shows that the benefits are evident, but there is a noticeable gap between research and practice.

The purpose of this action research study was to discover the impact, academically and socially/emotionally, single subject acceleration could have on a student in Kindergarten. This research study will also show how we worked to meet the needs of the student when they could no longer be met in the classroom.

As I conducted my study, I utilized was Kurt Lewin's action research model. His model represents a spiraling, cyclical process (see Figure 1. A Representation of Lewin's Action Research Cycle). As I proceeded through this process, I first identified what was happening now. I was made aware of a Kindergarten student who was performing at a level significantly above her peers. Her teacher and I discussed the situation, negotiated with those who would be involved in accelerating the student, explored several options or opportunities, assessed possibilities and examined constraints. After this, we developed a plan and put it into motion. Those directly involved with the student, as well as myself, monitored the situation, met, discussed and made adjustments to the situation. We periodically evaluated the situation. After evaluation, we revised the plan and went through the process again.



*Figure 1. A Representation of Lewin's Action Research Cycle (Mills, 2011 , p.15)*

### **Area of Focus Statement**

The focus of this action research project is to determine the academic and social and emotional effects of acceleration. I chose this topic because there is a need

at our school for students who are far outperforming their peers to have opportunities to continue to move forward in their learning. I saw the need, especially, for those students who have no true peers in their classroom or at their grade level.

I was working with a Kindergarten student who was reading and writing well above her grade level. There were no other students in her classroom, or in the other sections of Kindergarten, reading at her level. As a result, this student had no opportunity to interact and discuss reading content with her peers. Her options were to work individually with her teacher and/or work with me. At the time, I was working with her, but I felt she needed more of a challenge, meaning exposure to the first grade Reading curriculum, and the opportunity to work with other students at her reading level. By allowing the student to participate in a first grade reading group, we hoped to provide an opportunity for her that would keep her interested and challenged in reading and allow her learn at a pace that met her needs. I also conducted this research in hopes that, if single subject acceleration met the needs of high ability or gifted students, we will be able to offer this option to other students with similar needs.

As I begin my research, I must admit, I had an existing belief that allowing students to participate in single subject acceleration was a viable solution to the problem of having a student performing above grade level in a particular subject.

### **Research Questions**

How does single subject acceleration in Kindergarten impact the student's academic performance in Reading and their social and emotional development?

## **Review of Literature**

As I seek to answer the questions; how does single subject acceleration in Kindergarten impact a student's academic performance in reading and her social and emotional development? I examined research in the area of acceleration and other areas closely related. These areas included; academic and affective impact of acceleration, effects of non-acceleration, pre-service teacher preparation, best practice, teacher attitudes of acceleration, student perspectives of having been accelerated, differentiated instruction, and acceleration in Reading. Reviewing the literature in these multiple areas has provided me with insight as to the effects of acceleration, both academic and social and emotional, and the factors, variables and outcomes involved in the process.

By learning more about the subject of acceleration it assisted me in putting it into practice and gave me insight into understanding more about those who need acceleration. This is the ultimate form of advocacy for gifted and high-ability students. It is important that we not only recognize the needs of gifted and high ability students, but that we work towards meeting these needs. If educators do not provide these opportunities, we are keeping students from meeting their true potential (Reis et al., 2004). We are at risk of placing these learners in a position where they may become demotivated, which may lead to a plethora of other problems. Pfeiffer (2003) asked distinguished scholars, researchers and educators in the gifted field to identify the most important research findings in the last five years in the gifted field. Responses included the following: the importance of

differentiation in the regular classroom, the benefits of homogenous ability grouping, the positive relationship between acceleration and achievement, findings about the negative uses of cooperative learning and the value of inquiry-driven curricula. (Pfeiffer, 2003, p.155-156) The mention of the positive relationship between acceleration and achievement by experts reaffirms the importance of advocating for acceleration in situations, which require it.

After reviewing a significant amount of literature with regards to acceleration, several themes emerged. These themes consisted of; academic impact of acceleration, socioaffective impact of acceleration, differentiated instruction, best practice, teacher preparation, teacher attitudes and student perspectives of gifted education.

### **Lack of Implementation**

The literature examined reflected overwhelming support of acceleration (Anderson, 2008; Steenberg-Hu & Moon, 2010), yet points out that it is not widely practiced. One reason for the lack of implementation is that acceleration is not just a simple instructional strategy that can be implemented at the drop of a hat. Acceleration is a process. Many factors need to be taken into consideration before a student can, or should, be accelerated. For acceleration to be successful, those involved must carefully consider the student's academic as well as social and emotional characteristics. In addition, because every student is unique each acceleration situation will be different and must be examined critically by a group of

knowledgeable people. The effects of acceleration will also be different for each student, therefore there must be continued monitoring.

Other factors affecting the implementation of acceleration are: lack of support by administration, lack of knowledge about identification (Anderson, 2008), lack of time, lack of resources (Reis et al, 2004), and an increase in importance of standardized testing scores (Graffam, 2006; Reis, 2004; VanTassel-Baska, 2007). Unfortunately, recent federal legislation has caused the education system to focus on those students who were not proficient with regards to their performance on standardized tests. This student population seemed to have the greatest need when, in reality, the need of our high-ability and gifted population is of equal importance. This has led to what Gallagher (1998) has referred to as a “quiet crisis”(p. 161) . This is a crisis in the sense that these high-ability and gifted students are lacking the challenges they need to become our future leaders and innovators. Where do we start in resolving this issue?

### **Impact on Academic Achievement**

There are two of the big questions regarding acceleration: Does it benefit students academically? and Does it have a negative impact on a student’s social and emotional state? Anderson (2008) and VanTassel-Baska & Brown (2007) report that if acceleration is done carefully it can have a positive impact on students’ academic achievement. Numerous studies show gains in subject areas when students are accelerated. Daniel Anderson refers to study in which the findings show, “the accelerated groups showed greater achievement, and the accelerated students were

approximately one full year ahead of the non accelerated students” (2008).

Although acceleration seems to hold a negative connotation with regards to social and emotional impact, not much evidence was brought forth that supported this belief (Anderson, 2008; Hertzog, 2003).

Several studies shared students’ perspectives on the impact of acceleration and homogenous grouping and reported definite academic advantages. When asked about social/emotional impact, students shared both positive and negative implications (Anderson, 2008). Many students, in hindsight, credit their accomplishments later in life to their experience in gifted programs (Hertzog, 2003). Many of the challenges had to do with a student’s change in academic standing among their peers, which brings forth the knowledge that students are comparing their achievement with that of their peers, not relative to their own growth and learning (Adams-Byers, Whitsell & Moon, 2004). Knowing that students consider themselves in high standing if they are performing better than their peers is unsettling, especially if that group of peers is comprised of low or average performers. There were findings, although few, that revealed negative outcomes of acceleration (Anderson, 2008; Hertzog, 2003).

### **Acceleration and Differentiated Instruction**

Differentiated instruction and homogenous grouping appear numerous times as a theme in the literature for strategies for meeting the needs of gifted students. Several teachers are attempting to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of these gifted/high ability students. The problem is that often times teachers may be



differentiating instruction with the intent to challenge or accelerate students, yet the instruction is not necessarily different or accelerative (Kanevsky, 2011).

Homogenous grouping has also been found to be beneficial to high-ability and gifted students. Homogenous grouping can provide gifted students with true peers who are at the same level of learning. This type of grouping can also provide students with opportunities to be challenged as well as to discuss, share, and explore ideas (Adelson & Carpenter, 2011). Both differentiated instruction and homogenous grouping are strategies that can be used to meet the needs of gifted/high ability students, but these strategies need to be integrated with fidelity (Van Tassel-Baska, 2007). It is what happens in these groups that makes them valuable (Adelson & Carpenter, 2011; Reis et al., 2004) or how the material is differentiated. Some students are being put in groups and being left to work on higher level material on their own with little guidance. Students put into higher level groups need guidelines, feedback and interaction from the teacher to ensure that what is going on in the group is in line with the teacher's objective. If teachers utilize homogenous grouping they must understand that gifted students also need the opportunity to be with students who have the same interests but are at different levels academically (Adams-Byers, Whitsell & Moon, 2004). By utilizing both homogenous and heterogenous grouping, educators can provide an environment that supports both academic and social/emotional needs.

### **Implementing Acceleration**

Acceleration can be done in many different ways. Two possible approaches for implementing acceleration are whole grade acceleration and single subject acceleration. When considering acceleration, best practice in conjunction with the individual student's needs and personality should be considered equally. After reviewing eleven curriculum models, VanTassel-Baska & Brown (2007) noted that best practice for high ability learners included "acceleration, homogenous grouping, the use of higher level thinking models, inquiry-based learning, student-centered learning, and problem based learning" (p. 351-352). Although these models have been identified there seems to be a lack of teacher training and support to implement them.

Not only can acceleration be structured in different ways, it can be implemented at different times during a student's educational journey. Time is essential in identifying gifted or high ability students. By identifying them early, teachers are better equipped to keep students in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1998); ZPD is where students are working at a level that provides a challenge (Adelson & Carpenter, 2011). As soon as students move through Vygotsky's zones, teachers must ensure that they continue to be presented with challenges, to feed their curiosity and motivation. Just as adults are unmotivated when presented with material they know, so are students. Constantly being forced to learn things already known creates an attitude of resentment for the learning environment. If this happens in the students' first years of their educational experience it can lead to other problems. By identifying these students early on, such as in Kindergarten (Adelson & Carpenter, 2011), and differentiating instruction

for them or accelerating them, we are helping them to form a positive attitude about their educational environment (Hertzog, 2003).

### **Teachers' Attitudes Towards Acceleration**

Teachers' attitudes impact the implementation of acceleration in that the teacher ultimately plays a major role in the acceleration process. The teacher must; recognize the need for acceleration, advocate for the student, be in constant communicate with parents, collaborate with the Talented and Gifted instructor and be an active observer. Teachers can get comfortable with what they are teaching and continue to teach the same content in the same way. Staff development and training in areas such as differentiated instruction and gifted education is a step in the right direction. These opportunities for teachers create positive pressure, which will encourage teachers to buy into the idea of change towards an environment appropriate for gifted/high-ability students. Administrators' participation in the trainings will give them an appreciation of the teacher's role in meeting the needs of gifted students while they are continuing to meet the needs of all students. Administrators can also increase teacher buy in by providing the needed resources and time for collaboration (Johnsen, Haensly, Ryser & Ford, 2002; VanTassel-Baska, 2007).

### **Preparing Teachers for Acceleration**

Teacher preparation, whether pre-service or in-service, with regards to meeting the needs of gifted students is an area in which schools must continue to

push if we are to insure challenges are provided to our gifted and talented youth. (VanTassel-Baska, 2007). Teachers identified by students as motivating and inspiring, are the ones whose teaching style is more student-centered, are passionate about their subject area, teach from experience, use real problems, conduct hands on activities and use meaningful examples (Gentry, Steenbergen-Hu & Choi 2011). They have high expectations for their students as well as themselves, but not only do they have high expectations, they support their students in living up to those expectations (Gentry, Steenbergen-Hu & Choi, 2011). Despite all of the benefits of teacher training in areas such as differentiated instruction, grouping options, gifted education, and inquiry based learning, teachers still lack training in these important areas (Adelson & Carpenter, 2011).

## **Summary**

The best argument for acceleration is the repercussions of non-acceleration. Children develop at different rates. As educators we must allow students to continue this development in spite of their age (Anderson, 2008). At times, teachers want the whole class to be at the same place because it is easier, but that can contribute to students' lack of motivation (Anderson, 2008) underachievement, and encountering social issues (Mooij, 1999). If teachers only require students to complete grade level work, when they can do more, that is all they will do (Adams-Byers, Whitsell & Moon, 2004). Tolan's (1996) cheetah analogy is a powerful example of gifted/high ability students who are not given opportunities to grow at a pace that is appropriate for them. The analogy explains that if you put a cheetah, the fastest

animal in the world, in a zoo and only give it food that it does not have to chase, it will not run. Here was an animal with amazing innate skills and abilities, but the cheetah was not allowed or asked to use those skills and abilities, so it did not. If we do not ask or require students to use their skills and abilities, they will not.

As educators it is our job to provide challenges and support for all children as they move through their educational careers. As educators of the gifted, it is our job to, first find those students, and then to provide them with the opportunities, tools, challenges and support that will allow them to reach their fullest potential (Gentry, 2009; Van Tassel-Baska & Johnson, 2007). Acceleration has been identified as one, among several, best practice strategies for gifted or high-ability students. A significant amount of research has been conducted in the area of acceleration, and research indicates this approach can have positive academic and social/emotional effects, but because students are different and factors affecting students are different, it is difficult to apply findings and generalizations to all students. Therefore, continued research is needed in this area. There also seems to be a contradiction between research and practice. If acceleration is considered best practice, why then, are we not doing more of it? What will it take to implement best practice in the area of gifted education?

### **Intervention**

In order to conduct this action research project, an actual acceleration situation was implemented. In order to do this, the student's teacher and I first determined the need for acceleration, next we arranged for the student to join a

first-grade guided reading group. Guided Reading in first grade consists of a group of approximately five students and the teacher, or a Guided Reading teacher, meeting for 20 minutes of reading instruction. The twenty-minute period of Guided Reading was followed up with a time where she worked with me on writing. To engage, interest and challenge her in writing, I had her working with a web-based program. During the research project, one of our guided reading teachers was reassigned. This created a situation where the guided reading group only met with the guided reading teacher every other day for reading instruction. On the days where the group did not meet with the teacher, they were to do independent reading and writing activities. After observing the independent reading and writing activities, I worked with the guided reading teacher to create independent work that would require students to increase their thinking and utilize technology (See Appendix G).

### **Study Context**

This action research project takes place in a K-3 building. There are five sections of each grade level. Classrooms at the K-3 level are self-contained. Guided reading teachers support reading instruction, at the K-3 level. Guided Reading, at this level, focuses on the development of reading and comprehension skills. Some writing and grammar instruction may take place during this time. Typically, the class will be divided into four groups based on reading levels. About forty minutes is designated for guided reading time. During this time the classroom teacher will meet with two of the reading groups, and the guided reading teacher will meet with

the other two groups. After a designated amount of time, or number of books read, the teachers will change groups. This allows the classroom teacher to get to know each of her students as readers. The high group in this particular classroom is reading at a mid-year second-grade level. Each day, the student who is being accelerated will walk down to the first grade classroom and participate in Guided Reading for twenty minutes. After the twenty minutes of Guided Reading, on odd days, she goes with me to my room to work on writing. After the twenty minutes, on even days, she goes to a Kindergarten classroom and works on reading or writing independently. The first-grade classroom teacher involved in this project has taught first grade for twenty-three years. The guided reading teacher has taught K-5 Reading for eight years and has a Master's degree in Elementary Reading. I have taught fifth grade for eight years, have an endorsement in Reading, and I am in my first year as the K-6 Extended Learning Program Instructor.

### **Membership of the Action Research Group**

In order to conduct this action research, many people had to work together to determine need, set up schedules and monitor progress. The kindergarten teacher was the first to inquire about options that were available for a student in her class who was far exceeding grade-level performance. The teacher referred the student to me, the Extended Learning Instructor, in hopes of extending her learning in the area of Reading and Writing. We quickly decided that this option was not enough for the student and began to brainstorm other options. We decided that the

student had a need for not only advanced instruction, but a need for interaction with true peers as well. Our next step was to get permission from the student's parents, the principal and a first-grade teacher who had a guided reading group that would be a good fit, and who was willing to include this student. We also realized we needed to involve the guided reading teacher, the music teacher and another kindergarten teacher. After much conversation, organization, and convincing, the student began attending first-grade Guided Reading.

### **Negotiations to be Undertaken**

Getting that student into that first grade guided reading group was no easy task. The Kindergarten teacher and I saw a clear need for this student to be challenged, but we were hesitant to approach administration because it had been made very clear that our classrooms were to be self-contained. After considering many options, we saw no other solution than to accelerate this student in the area of reading. We convinced the principal to let us place the student in a first-grade guided reading group with the understanding that if the situation was not working we would discontinue. The teacher easily obtained parent permission to accelerate the student. I set out to find a willing first grade teacher with a reading group that would match our student's needs. We have five first-grade teachers in our K-3 building. I originally sent an e-mail asking if any of the teachers had a group that was reading at the I, J or K level and if so, would they be willing to take on another student for a couple of weeks. I received one response stating that that particular



teacher did not have any students reading at that level, so I proceeded to visit each teacher personally to explain the situation, and to see if we could find a situation that would work. After speaking with all five teachers, I went back to the one who, I felt, could make it work. After a lengthy conversation with that teacher, she agreed to accept the student into her guided reading group. I reassured her that we would reevaluate the situation periodically to make sure the student was progressing and that it was a positive situation for everyone.

### **Timeline**

- Phase 1 (January) Discussed, negotiated, explored opportunities, assessed possibilities, examined constraints, and developed a general plan.
- Phase 2 (February – March) Put general plan into action, monitored, gathered data, evaluated general plan and revised general plan.
- Phase 3 (March – April) Put revised general plan into action, monitored, gathered data, evaluated revised general plan. Surveyed teachers, analyzed data, reported findings, developed a plan of action.

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

#### **Data Collection**

I collected data in three different ways; I observed the student every other day in her accelerated situation, I surveyed the teachers who were directly involved

with the student's reading instruction, and I collected the student's Developmental Reading Continuum (DRA) scores from before, during and after the intervention (See table 1). My observations consisted of watching from a distance to see how the student interacted with her peers, and I also observed her participation in reading and writing. I surveyed the teachers involved using a survey that I created (see appendix 1 & 2). The survey contains questions about academic performance in relationship to her peers and social and emotional behaviors in the Kindergarten setting and in the first-grade setting. The DRA assessment was administered three times and was given by the first-grade guided reading teacher (See Table 1).

### **Data Analysis**

I coded the data from my surveys based on two themes, academics (See Appendix C & E) and social and emotional behaviors (See Appendix D & F). I surveyed the first-grade classroom teacher, the first-grade reading teacher, the kindergarten classroom teacher and the kindergarten reading teacher. I compared the first-grade classroom teacher's responses to the first-grade reading teacher's responses to see if their observations about the student's behavior were consistent. Although the data seems inconsistent, I believe it is consistent. The first-grade reading teacher was comparing the accelerated student to the average first graders, so the teacher indicated that the student was above the level of her peers. I believe the first-grade classroom teacher was comparing the accelerated student to the group of peers in her particular guided reading group, who are the highest group in the class, so this teacher indicated that the accelerated student was at the level of

her peers. I do not know this for sure. Both the first-grade classroom teacher and the first-grade reading teacher had the opportunity to work with the student in her accelerated situation. By surveying both of them and comparing their responses, I was able to get an evaluation of the student's general academic performance and behavior from two experienced, reliable sources. By evaluating the data from the surveys, I was hoping to find out which environment was a better fit (meaning the accelerated student was in an environment of true peers) for the student, based on not only the Developmental Reading Continuum scores, but on observations of experienced teachers. The responses to the academic questions would reveal if the teacher felt the student was in an environment in which she was learning with true peers. The responses to questions regarding behavior would reveal if the learning environment was having a positive or negative effect on the student's social and emotional behavior. The DRA scores show growth from October through April (See Table 1). We placed the student in the first grade classroom in February. I compared the growth in each of the areas from October to February, the time the student was in the Kindergarten classroom, to the February to April time, the time the student was in the first-grade classroom. The data shows growth in level of reading, and it shows significant growth in fluency (words per minute). By comparing the level M, DRA to the attempted level N, DRA, I came to the conclusion that between level M and level N is the students Zone of Proximal Development, the level at which learning takes place. Because level M is end of second-grade and level N is a beginning first-grade level, this tells me, that accelerating this student was the right choice to meet her academic needs. After analyzing the surveys and the test scores,

it was evident which environment enabled this student to continue to grow and be engaged in her learning.

*Table 1.*

<b>Month</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>April</b>
<b>Developmental Reading Continuum Assessment (DRA)</b>	Level G	Level L	Level M (end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade text)	<b><i>Attempted</i></b> Level N (beginning 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade text)
<b>Accuracy</b>	93%	99%	99%	94%
<b>Fluency – Words per minute (WPM)</b>	55 wpm	66 wpm	101 wpm	84 wpm
<b>Comprehension</b>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

## **Findings**

My first research question was how does single subject acceleration in Kindergarten impact the student's academic performance in Reading? I used my surveys, observations, and DRA scores to determine that accelerating this student in reading had a positive effect on her performance in reading. The data from the academic part of the survey revealed that both the first-grade classroom teacher and the first-grade reading teacher felt that the student was performing at a level equivalent to the first grade group. This group is the top reading group in the class and is reading at a mid-year second grade level. Both teachers responded that the

student is not only equivalent to her peers in the areas of comprehension and fluency, but is equivalent to her peers with regards to communicating her thoughts, participating in discussion and utilizing technology at this level as well. This clearly shows that acceleration has provided her with an opportunity to participate at a level, well above her grade level, in which she can be successful. On the days I observed the student in her accelerated situation, I observed her interacting with her peers as they discussed the stories they were reading. The student was engaged and contributing at the level of her group. I also observed her as she was working in the guided reading group on the independent activities when the guided-reading teacher was not present. The student was, again, engaged, on task, writing, reading, utilizing technology and researching right along with her peers. Finally, the DRA scores showed an increase from October to February of five reading levels and an increase of 11 words per minute. In February the student was moved from the Kindergarten reading group to the first-grade reading group. The DRA scores showed an increase from February to April of one reading level and an increase of 35 words per minute. The student is now, in April, reading text that is at an end-of-second-grade level. She is reading at a level that is challenging her, and she has true peers to interact with.

My second research question was how does single subject acceleration in Kindergarten impact the student's social and emotional development? The data from the social and emotional part of the survey revealed that the student had a positive attitude about reading, writing and sharing in both the Kindergarten setting and in the first grade setting. The reading teacher included an additional comment

stating that while the student has a positive attitude “she seems so bored” in the Kindergarten reading group. The reading teacher also stated that when in the first grade group, the student shows confidence, enjoys challenges, enjoys working with the group and brings great discussion to the group. These two comments reveal the students social and emotional state in the two environments. As I observed the student in the first-grade classroom, she was engaged, interacting with peers regarding her reading and writing, she was laughing and smiling as she interacted with her first-grade group. I also observed her socializing with her first-grade peers and the first-grade teacher outside of the classroom. This showed me that the student was comfortable with the first-grade group and teacher.

The first grade environment seems to be a much better learning environment for this student both academically and socially and emotionally. Acceleration has put the wind beneath this student’s wings, and she is soaring.

### **Action Planning**

This action research project has shown the positive effects that acceleration can have on a student’s learning and behavior. The project has also shown that, if people are passionate about meeting the needs of students and work together, it can be done. This project has provided beneficial information that can be used as we write our district acceleration policy. The 7-12 Extended Learning Program instructor and myself are in the process of writing an acceleration policy for our

district and hope to have it approved by the school board and in effect for the next school year. At the K-6 level, I hope to continue to work with administration and teachers to develop a plan for single subject acceleration. I will also continue to advocate for the student in this action research project to be accelerated as long as it is appropriate for her.

## References

- Adams-Byers, J., Squiller Whitsell, S., & Moon, S. M. (2004). Gifted students' perceptions. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 48(1), 13.
- Adelson, J. L., & Carpenter, B. D. (2011). Grouping for achievement gains. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 55(4), 13.
- Anderson, D. (2008). *Myths and misconceptions of acceleration*. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (ED503034)
- Gallagher, J.J. (1994). Current and historical thinking on education for gifted and talented students. In P. Ross (Ed.), *National excellence: An anthology of readings* (pp. 83-107). Washington, DC: U. S Department of Education.
- Gentry, M., Steenbegen-Hu, S., & Choi, B. (2011). Student-identified exemplary teachers: Insights from talented teachers. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 55(2), 14.
- Graffam, B. (2006). A case study of teachers of gifted learners: Moving from prescribed practice to described practitioners. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50(2), 12.
- Hertzog, N. B. (2003). Impact of gifted programs from the students' perspective. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 47(2), 12.
- Kanevsky, L. (2011). Differential differentiation: What types of differentiation do students want?. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 55(4), 20.
- Mooij, T. (1999). Integrating gifted children into kindergarten by improving educational process. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 43(2), 11.
- Pfeiffer, S. I. (2003). Challenges and opportunities for students who are gifted: What experts say. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 47(2), 2003.
- Reis, S. M., Gubbins, J. E., Briggs, C. J., Schreiber, F. J., Richards, S., Jacobs, J. K., . . . Renzulli, J. S. (2004). Reading instruction for talented readers: Case studies



- documenting few opportunities for continuous progress. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 48(4), 22.
- Steenbergen-Hu, S., & Moon, S. M. (2011). The effects of acceleration on high-ability learners: A meta-analysis. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 55(1), 14.
- Tolan, S. S. (1996). Is it a cheetah?. *Is It a Cheetah*. Retrieved March 22, 2012, from [http://www.stephanietolan.com/is\\_it\\_a\\_cheetah.htm](http://www.stephanietolan.com/is_it_a_cheetah.htm)
- VanTassel-Baska, J., & Brown, E. F. (2007). Toward best practice: An analysis of the efficacy of curriculum models in gifted education. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 51(4), 16.
- VanTassel-Baska, J., & Johnsen, S. K. (2007). Teacher education standards for the field of gifted education: A vision of coherence for personal preparation. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 51(2), 23.
- VanTassel-Baska, J. (2006). Leadership for the future in gifted education. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 51(1), 5.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1998). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky (Vol. 5): Child Psychology*. New York, NY: Plenun Press.

## **Appendix A: Teacher Survey Comparing Kindergarten Student to First Grade Peers**

### **Teacher Survey – Kindergarten Student in First Grade Guided Reading Group**

This survey is comparing the Kindergarten student to her peers in First Grade.

If you respond “no” to any of the following questions please indicate if her level is above or below her peers by writing “**above**” or “**below**”. Also, please feel free to make an additional comment if a yes/no answer does not fit the question.

1. Does student comprehend at a level equivalent to her peers?
2. Does student communicate in a group setting at a level equivalent to her peers?
3. Does student write (content) at a level equivalent to her peers?
4. Does student write (mechanics) at a level equivalent to her peers?
5. Does student respond verbally to reading and questions at a level equivalent to her peers?
6. Is the student’s fluency at a rate equivalent to her peers?
7. Are the students listening skills equivalent to those of her peers?
8. Does the student utilize technology at a level equivalent to her peers?
9. Is the student’s task commitment equivalent to the level of her peers?
10. Is the student’s ability to follow directions equivalent to that of her peers?
11. Are the student’s organizational skills equivalent to those of her peers?
12. Does the student participate equally with regards to her peers?
13. Is the quality of participation at a level equivalent to her peers?
14. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about reading?
15. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about writing?
16. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about sharing in group?
17. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about being in the first grade room?

**Additional Comments:** Please write any comments you feel that are important regarding the student’s academic performance or social emotional behavior she demonstrates.

A few more questions about the teacher:

Name:

Degree:

Endorsements:

Years Taught (please include grade levels):

**Teacher Survey – Kindergarten Student in First Grade Guided Reading Group**

## Appendix B: Teacher Survey Comparing Kindergarten Student to Kindergarten Peers

This survey is comparing the Kindergarten student to her peers in Kindergarten.

If you respond “no” to any of the following questions please indicate if her level is above or below her peers by writing “**above**” or “**below**”. Also, please feel free to make an additional comment if a yes/no answer does not fit the question.

1. Does student comprehend at a level equivalent to her peers?
2. Does student communicate in a group setting at a level equivalent to her peers?
3. Does student write (content) at a level equivalent to her peers?
4. Does student write (mechanics) at a level equivalent to her peers?
5. Does student respond verbally to reading and questions at a level equivalent to her peers?
6. Is the student’s fluency at a rate equivalent to her peers?
7. Are the student’s listening skills equivalent to those of her peers?
8. Does the student utilize technology at a level equivalent to her peers?
9. Is the student’s task commitment equivalent to the level of her peers?
10. Is the student’s ability to follow directions equivalent to that of her peers?
11. Are the student’s organizational skills equivalent to those of her peers?
12. Does the student participate equally with regards to her peers?
13. Is the quality of participation at a level equivalent to her peers?
14. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about reading?
15. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about writing?
16. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about sharing in group?
17. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about being in the first grade room?

**Additional Comments:** Please write any comments you feel that are important regarding the student’s academic performance or social emotional behavior she demonstrates.

A few more questions about the teacher:

Name:

Degree:

Endorsements:

Years Taught (please include grade levels):

### Appendix C: Data Coding Academic Comparing Kindergartener to First Grade Peers

#### Academic

Questions comparing Kindergartener to her 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade peers	First Grade Classroom Teacher	First Grade Reading Teacher
1. Does student comprehend at a level equivalent to her peers?	Yes	No, above
2. Does student communicate in a group setting at a level equivalent to her peers?	Yes	No, above
3. Does student write (content) at a level equivalent to her peers?	No	yes
4. Does student write (mechanics) at a level equivalent to her peers?	Yes	No, above
5. Does student respond verbally to reading and questions at a level equivalent to her peers?	Yes	No, above
6. Is the student's fluency at a rate equivalent to her peers?	Yes	No, above
7. Are the students listening skills equivalent to those of her peers?	Yes	No, above
8. Does the student utilize technology at a level equivalent to her peers?	Yes	Yes
9. Is the student's task commitment equivalent to the level of her peers?	Yes	Yes
10. Is the student's ability to follow directions equivalent to that of her peers?	Yes	Yes
11. Are the student's organizational skills equivalent to those of her peers?	Yes	Yes
12. Does the student participate equally with regards to her peers?	Yes	Yes
13. Is the quality of participation at a level equivalent to her peers?	Yes	No, above

## Appendix D: Data Coding Comparing Kindergartener to First Grade Peers Social and Emotional

### Social Emotional

Questions comparing Kindergartener to her 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade peers	First Grade Classroom Teacher	First Grade Reading Teacher
14. Does the student participate equally with regards to her peers?	Yes	Yes
15. Is the quality of participation at a level equivalent to her peers?	Yes	Yes
16. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about reading?	Yes	Yes
17. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about writing?	Yes	Yes
18. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about sharing in group?	Yes	Yes
19. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about being in the first grade room?	Yes	Yes

### **Additional Comments by First Grade Classroom Teacher:**

The student began in my classroom with Guided Reading instruction on a trial basis. She fit in quite well with my top reading group. She was able to be actively engaged in all activities presented. She was able to work independently without extra instruction or supervision. I feel it would be beneficial for the student to continue Guided Reading instruction in an advanced grade level environment.

### **Additional Comments by First Grade Reading Teacher:**

She fits in perfect with the first grade group she has joined. This first grade group is already reading at a middle second grade level. So she is reading at a middle of the year second grader. She is very confident and enjoys working with a group at her peers at the same level. She loves to be challenged and brings great discussion to the group. This group has made her grow in many ways.

**Appendix E: Data Coding Academic Comparing Kindergarten student to Kindergarten Peers**  
Academic

Questions comparing Kindergartener to her Kindergarten peers	Kindergarten Classroom Teacher	Kindergarten Reading Teacher
1. Does student comprehend at a level equivalent to her peers?	No, above	No, above
2. Does student communicate in a group setting at a level equivalent to her peers?	No, above	No, above
3. Does student write (content) at a level equivalent to her peers?	No, above	No, above
4. Does student write (mechanics) at a level equivalent to her peers?	No, above	No, above
5. Does student respond verbally to reading and questions at a level equivalent to her peers?	No, above	No, above
6. Is the student's fluency at a rate equivalent to her peers?	No, above	No, above
7. Are the students listening skills equivalent to those of her peers?	No, above	No, above
8. Does the student utilize technology at a level equivalent to her peers?	No, above	No, above
9. Is the student's task commitment equivalent to the level of her peers?	No, above	No, above
10. Is the student's ability to follow directions equivalent to that of her peers?	Yes	No, above
11. Are the student's organizational skills equivalent to those of her peers?	Yes	No, above
12. Does the student participate equally with regards to her peers?	No, above	No, above
13. Is the quality of participation at a level equivalent to her peers?	No, above	No, above

## Appendix F: Data Coding Comparing Kindergartener to Kindergarten Peers Social and Emotional

### Social Emotional

Questions comparing Kindergartener to her Kindergarten peers	Kindergarten Classroom Teacher	Kindergarten Reading Teacher
14. Does the student participate equally with regards to her peers?	Yes	Yes
15. Is the quality of participation at a level equivalent to her peers?	Yes	Yes
16. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about reading?	Yes	Yes
17. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about writing?	Yes	Yes
18. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about sharing in-group?	Yes	Yes
19. Does the student appear to have a positive attitude about being in the first grade room?	Yes	Yes

### Additional Comments by Kindergarten Classroom Teacher:

I knew the student was an extraordinary little girl the first few weeks of school. She was reading everything that was in the room; from posters, to notes being sent home, and directions written on the board. Not only did she shine in her reading, but in her writing as well. She was able to sit down and write complete sentences, while the rest of her class was just learning the letters and their sounds. During guided reading in my room, she was bored because she was so much higher than her peers. I had her do some independent work, but she was missing out on the social aspect of working/learning with her peers. I knew the student needed to be challenged and with a group at her level. Being in first grade has helped her grow in her reading/writing and be able to socialize with a group at her level. She has shown lots of excitement with working with first grade and talks about how she has made many new friends! The student says, "I like reading with my group in first grade."

### Additional Comments by Kindergarten Reading Teacher:

She fits in perfect with the first grade group she has joined. This first grade group is already reading at a middle second grade level. So she is reading at a middle of the year second grader. She is very confident and enjoys working with a group at her peers at the same level. She loves to be challenged and brings great discussion to the group. This group has made her grow in many ways.

## Appendix G: Independent Reading and Writing Activities

### First Grade Independent Reading Activities

<p><b>Research</b> – Use facts4me Username: Saber Password: mice05 Look up one of these and tell about what you learned in 4 or 5 sentences. Write one question you have after reading about your topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Musical Instruments</li> <li>- Landforms</li> <li>- Freshwater animals</li> <li>- Freshwater fish</li> </ul>	<p><b>Writing</b> - Use facts4me Username: Saber Password: mice05 Look up: - Women(U.S) – Helen Keller Read the article about her and look at the pictures. Choose one of the pictures and write 4 or 5 sentences about what you think is happening in that picture.</p>	<p><b>Imagination</b> – This week scuba divers explored the bottom of the Mississippi River. They found these items on the bottom of the river:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a tire</li> <li>- a refrigerator</li> <li>- a small fishing boat</li> <li>- a purse</li> <li>- a glass pop bottle</li> <li>- an old bicycle</li> </ul> <p>Tell how you think each item ended up at the bottom of the river. Draw a picture to go with your writing.</p>
<p><b>Hands – On</b> Use the sign language guide at the back of the Helen Keller book.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learn how to sign your name</li> <li>- learn how to sign “Hello, my name is _____”</li> </ul> <p>*Use iPad to record yourself doing this.</p>	<p><b>Compare and Contrast</b> Compare Frog and Toad to two other friends you know. They can be real or imaginary. Use a venn diagram to compare how these two groups of friends are alike and different.</p>	<p><b>Illustrator</b> – Choose a character from one of the books and use the storyboard to show what would happen if you met and spent the day with that character. Include pictures and speech bubbles.</p>
<p><b>Characters</b> – Complete the sentence starter worksheet using characters from the books you read.</p>	<p><b>Making Judgments</b> – Complete a report card for the 6 books you read. Be prepared to explain why you gave each book its score.</p>	<p><b>Technology/Writing</b> – Complete a storyjumper story that relates to one of the stories you read. (must get approval)</p>